

NETWORK NEWS

FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS OF HUD INSURED AND ASSISTED HOUSING

DELIVERING TECHNOLOGY ACCESS TO AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES. CREATING OPPORTUNITIES.

Join Neighborhood Networks in celebrating a decade of success! Plan now to attend the National Training Conference in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, June 29–July 1, 2005. Preconference sessions will start on Monday, June 27, 2005.

To learn more, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org or call toll-free (888) 312-2743.

2005 National Conference Puts Summer Spotlight on 10th Anniversary

“Nobody can stop you. If it’s your dream, you’re unstoppable.”

You can hear the steely resolve in the voice of Michael Thomas, former resident of HUD-insured and -assisted housing and currently a volunteer at the Gateway@Edgewood Terrace, a Neighborhood Networks center in Washington, DC.

Ten years ago, Neighborhood Networks started as a simple vision, and its success has been unstoppable. Today, HUD community technology centers are open in cities and rural towns across America.

From June 29 to July 1, 2005, in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, Neighborhood Networks will observe a decade of dreams imagined and realized at a national training and education conference. The 10th Anniversary Conference, “Connecting Communities. Creating Opportunities,” is sponsored by HUD’s Office of Multifamily Housing Programs and promises to be an exciting, information-packed event.

Thomas is one of several residents featured in a 10th Anniversary Neighborhood Networks video expected to be premiered during the conference. The video highlights the remarkable impact that Neighborhood Networks has had on individuals and communities nationwide.

Opportunities Abound

The conference will provide the perfect opportunity for Neighborhood Networks stakeholders (property owners and managers, center staff, volunteers, partners, residents, and HUD staff) to exchange ideas and discuss the latest techniques, strategies, and tools for building and sustaining centers.

Recognition. Resources. Networking. Sharing Success. And, some of the most innovative and interesting speakers in the fields of

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technology and housing and community development will add to the total learning experience.

Conference participants will engage in training programs designed to strengthen individual centers and build a broader consortia of Neighborhood Networks centers. The week's activities will include sessions for center staff, property owners, and other Neighborhood Networks stakeholders. Participants will network with potential partners, learn about consortia building, and hear from center staff about successful approaches for offering winning programs to residents.

Fundraising and grant writing workshops will be center stage, and workshops will assist participants in finding and applying for vital monetary resources necessary for building and sustaining vibrant center activities. Additional workshops will hone in on techniques for finding local partners and ways to create beneficial, lasting relationships. Another important issue for centers is finding and managing volunteers. Training on appropriate ways to manage a volunteer workforce will help centers build day-to-day relationships and maintain a team of vital staffing sources.

Come Early

The 10th Anniversary Neighborhood Networks conference will also include two preconference workshops—the first one on June 27 is specifically designed for new centers. This workshop will go beyond the basics, providing vital resources that can be used to establish strong foundations and build programs that respond to residents' needs. On June 28, the second preconference workshop will give participants hands-on experience in grant writing.

Experience Counts

The Neighborhood Networks 10th Anniversary Conference is sure to be a learning opportunity you will not want to miss, as shown by past performance. Following the 2002 national conference, participants praised the activities and level of information presented in the workshop sessions. This conference included particularly motivating keynote and plenary speeches by David Eisner of AOL Time Warner and political commentator and author Juan Williams. Both presenters offered their interpretation of the important role that technology access plays in the development of an educated workforce and encouraged participants to continue to meet the challenges of the new century.

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The 10th Anniversary Conference will feature keynote and plenary addresses from noted public figures and offer more than 20 choices of workshops in which participants will learn about:

- Programs for adults;
- Developing fundraising strategies;
- Working with foundations and securing grants;
- Managing staff and volunteers;
- Youth education programs;
- Workforce development;
- Strategic planning;
- Reaching out to residents;
- Overcoming barriers to employment; and
- Planning for transition.

Participants will also have an opportunity to visit the Kennedy Space Center for an indepth look at the work done by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)—a valuable Neighborhood Networks national partner for the past 5 years.

Plan NOW to Participate

The conference will be teeming with excitement as participants network, interact, and share ideas and information about center management, programs, challenges, and successes. In addition to the workshops, more than 25 exhibitors will highlight cutting-edge resources and products of special interest to community technology centers. It will also celebrate the initiative's achievements and recognize the hard work and dedication of residents, center staff, owners and managers, and HUD staff.

Don't miss the most exciting and important gathering of Neighborhood Networks stakeholders to date. For more information about this conference, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org or call the Neighborhood Networks Information Center toll-free at (888) 312-2743 or TTY (800) 483-2209. Join HUD in observing a decade of "Delivering Technology Access to America's Communities." 





Neighborhood Networks Helps HUD Achieve Strategic Goals

The Neighborhood Networks initiative, created in 1995, helps HUD achieve strategic goals of:

- Promoting decent, affordable housing by helping HUD-assisted renters make progress toward self-sufficiency. For 10 years, Neighborhood Networks has provided technology access, work-force development, and educational opportunities for residents living in HUD-assisted and -insured housing. In many instances, residents who take advantage of these opportunities have found that their family earnings and assets have increased, enabling them to take advantage of homeownership opportunities and giving them a chance to experience an improved quality of life. Families moving to homeownership from affordable rental housing free up space for other families; and
- Strengthening communities by providing and coordinating resources for neighborhood revitalization efforts by local partners. By leveraging local resources, Neighborhood Networks centers develop programs that address their communities' priorities.

Neighborhood Networks was one of the first federal initiatives to promote self-sufficiency, and it has been successful because of the commitment of property owners and managers to respond to HUD's encouragement to establish and maintain Neighborhood Networks centers.

Promoting Self-Sufficiency

HUD's primary goal for Neighborhood Networks is to create on-site gateways to self-sufficiency for residents of HUD assisted and insured housing. To meet this goal, Neighborhood Networks centers provide access to technology, computer training, literacy, education classes, and afterschool activities—programs that prepare residents for employment opportunities and strengthen working families. In properties serving senior citizens and people with disabilities, the goal is to provide onsite computer access, health clinics, and social services that improve residents' quality of life and maximize their ability to live independently.

As locally driven initiatives, no two centers' self-sufficiency programs are alike. Activities are geared to residents' needs, center resources, and partnerships. Typical self-sufficiency programs at many centers include:

- **Computer skills.** Courses range from introductory to more advanced classes in Word, Excel, and other office skills;
- **Adult education.** Literacy, general equivalency diploma (GED) preparation, and distance-learning classes are available at many Neighborhood Networks centers. A growing number of properties with large immigrant populations offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Partnerships with local colleges and universities link residents to previously untapped higher education resources, provided either at the center or nearby campus. Neighborhood Networks' national partnership with the American Association of Community Colleges also enhances centers' education resources;
- **Workforce development programs.** Résumé preparation, job searches, job-readiness and -retention programs, job clubs, and microenterprise programs are core Neighborhood Networks center programs. Centers may also link residents to local employers (e.g., banks, hospitals) who will train, then employ, residents. Some centers have developed partnerships with job-training programs (e.g., computer repair, chef training) to prepare residents for local employment opportunities. Neighborhood Networks' national partnership with the Department of Labor (DOL) gives residents a direct link to DOL's nationwide network of One-Stop Centers and their comprehensive employment and training resources;
- **Financial literacy.** Some centers offer classes in banking, credit and consumer education, and building assets to encourage residents to become financially self-sufficient and ready to take advantage of homeownership opportunities;
- **Youth education and employment.** Centers have a variety of programs to educate youth and introduce them to the world of work. Some centers participate in HUD's YouthBuild program, which prepares young adults for jobs with a future. Also, centers are able to take advantage of Neighborhood Networks' national partnership with the U.S. Department of Education. This partnership helps students research and secure financial aid for college or job training; and
- **Afterschool programs.** Many centers provide afterschool and summer activities for children and youth. This essential service helps parents by removing the childcare barrier so that they have the opportunity to find and retain employment.

Strengthening Communities

The Neighborhood Networks initiative is helping HUD strengthen communities by:

- **Providing multiservice community technology centers open to residents and the larger community.** Adults receive job training and placement, education, and many supportive services. Afterschool programs help students improve their academic achievement and provide childcare for working parents. Youth can participate in recreation, education, and job-training programs. Onsite parenting classes, health clinics, and other programs may be available. Seniors can learn to become computer literate and receive onsite health and social services. Intergenerational activities link seniors to children and youth;
- **Reducing property crime and vandalism to make communities safer.** According to property owners and managers, by providing adult supervision after school, promoting connections among residents, and generating onsite activities, Neighborhood Networks centers have a positive impact on security and public safety;
- **Enhancing the quality of affordable housing and improving the marketability and bottom line of HUD-insured and -assisted housing.** A Neighborhood Networks center is seen as an amenity to a property. As such, properties with centers may experience reduced vacancy rates, decreased security costs, increased resident participation, and overall improvement in community spirit. These characteristics lead to a more stable community;
- **Providing local employers with skilled workers.** By helping residents qualify for employment and by linking them to local employment opportunities, Neighborhood Networks helps strengthen local economies. Further, local employers view multifamily residents and communities more positively and as vital contributors to the community;
- **Supporting service providers.** Public and private health and social service providers frequently seek ways to reach their target population. Neighborhood Networks center users are likely the population service providers are trying to reach. Often, service provider organizations will establish a partnership with centers to provide their services. These partnerships are welcomed by the centers because they enable the community to view them as a valuable resource. Services provided by organizations may



include parenting classes, back-to-school vaccination clinics, and public safety programs; and

- **Benefiting taxpayers.** As residents become more self-sufficient, they rely less on government subsidies.

Meeting Future Challenges

In only 10 years, Neighborhood Networks has become an initiative that can be found in urban, rural, and suburban communities throughout the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Equally impressive, Neighborhood Networks has evolved to help HUD meet the new challenges of building stronger communities and self-sufficient families in the 21st century.

In its second decade, Neighborhood Networks will continue to:

- 1. Develop national and local partnerships.** To increase center resources, Neighborhood Networks will continue to facilitate national and local partnerships for centers and consortia. As centers leverage more resources, their programs will be better able to meet residents' needs and interests;
- 2. Market Neighborhood Networks to property owners and managers.** Neighborhood Networks will continue reaching out to property owners and managers through its Web site, events, conferences, and publications to publicize the advantages of establishing and maintaining centers;
- 3. Encourage the growth of consortia.** Neighborhood Networks will continue to encourage centers to establish consortia. Consortium membership provides many benefits, such as networking with other centers, training, peer-to-peer mentoring, information sharing, and assistance with applying for 501(c)(3) nonprofit status; and
- 4. Expand and enhance HUD resources.** Neighborhood Networks is enhancing resources for centers, consortia, property owners and managers, and other stakeholders through the provision of:
 - The Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool (START). START is Neighborhood Networks' online business planning tool for centers. It promotes and helps centers with strategic planning, budgeting, and reporting;
 - Technical assistance (TA) for centers and consortia. Onsite TA consists of a several-day initial and followup visit from an expert who will assist centers and consortia with program

development and implementation, remote TA via a telephone hotline, and monthly conference calls;

- Publications that provide up-to-date information to centers, owners and managers, and HUD staff. Newsletters (*Network News* for owners and *NNewsline* for centers), updated fact sheets, and TA guides are available online and in print;
- The Neighborhood Networks Web site that provides weekly center success stories and information on funding opportunities, online publications, center and coordinator databases, and other resources and links; and
- National and regional conferences that keep centers and owners informed and up to date on trends in technology and successful program development and implementation. ■



Property Managers Praise Initiative's Community Impact

For 10 years, Neighborhood Networks has successfully brought technology access to residents of HUD-insured and -assisted housing across the country. Those involved with the initiative have embraced it gladly, acknowledging the myriad benefits it brings. Property managers and owners, in particular, have welcomed the positive impact Neighborhood Networks centers have had on their properties. They recognize that Neighborhood Networks centers are beneficial not only for their bottom line, but for helping their residents achieve greater success in life and gain pride in themselves and their communities.

Bringing Technology Access to Rural America

At United Properties Management, Inc. (UPM), in Little Rock, Arkansas, Miles Graham has witnessed remarkable transformations to properties where Neighborhood Networks centers have been established. He explains that many of the subsidized housing properties that UPM purchases have undeserved stigmas associated with them. "A lot of times the properties we take are properties no one else wants for one reason or another. So we go in, assess the neighborhood, and try to figure out ways to involve the communities."

Graham believes that Neighborhood Networks centers help smooth the strain between community and property. "A lot of

communities have an antagonistic approach to subsidized housing,” he says, “because they have a preconceived prejudice toward the type of residents associated with these properties.” That is why Graham supports Neighborhood Networks centers as a way to introduce the community to the positive side of these properties. “Get [the community] involved with centers, and it changes how they look at subsidized housing.”

The Scott County Computer Learning Center is an excellent example of this shared involvement. Established in 2000 at Scott County Apartments, the learning center brings technology to a part of Arkansas that previously had been bypassed by the growing digital revolution. “These residents didn’t even know what ‘high-speed access’ meant,” says Graham. When the center opened its doors, it welcomed both residents and community members into its computer laboratory. The center also brought workforce development programs, GED classes, and Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) training to the community. According to Graham, 54 participants have graduated from MCSE training and have obtained high-paying positions within the community.

Graham notes that with increased knowledge comes increased stability for residents and properties. He notes that after the Scott County center opened its doors, the complex experienced a 74 percent decrease in police complaints. “When you give [residents] hope, they take pride in themselves and their homes. They become more stable financially and mentally.” This, in turn, affects the value of the property. Graham believes that Neighborhood Networks centers “change the...overall value of properties tremendously.” As crime reports decrease and residents become more stable, these properties will often see an increase in their Real Estate Assessment Center scores, which increases their marketability and makes it easier for them to find community support in the form of partnerships and grants.

For Graham, the transformation that these centers bring to properties helps justify their startup costs. “These centers quickly become more valuable than the cost of starting them. Plus,” he adds, “we think they add value to their properties.” Because of all these positive influences that Graham has witnessed on properties affiliated with Neighborhood Networks centers, he remains one of the initiative’s strongest supporters among property owners and managers. He hopes to have five Neighborhood Networks centers active on UPM properties by the end of the first calendar quarter of 2005.

**“Get [the community]
involved with centers,
and it changes how they
look at subsidized housing.”**

*—Miles Graham
United Properties
Management, Inc.
Little Rock, Arkansas*

For additional information on Neighborhood Networks centers located on UPM properties, please contact:

Miles Graham
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United Properties Management, Inc.
6801 West 12th Street, Suite E
Little Rock, AR 72204
(501) 280-0037

Multicultural Education With an Entertaining Twist

For David Haas, property manager for Bayview Foundation, Inc., in Madison, Wisconsin, Neighborhood Networks has helped strengthen community relations through a multicultural appeal. Haas works closely with the Bayview International Center for Education and Arts, which its Web site heralds as “a model for multicultural citizenship in Dane County.” According to Haas, the center is located in one of the most culturally diverse communities in Wisconsin. When the Bayview Neighborhood Networks Center opened in 2000, it welcomed participants from eight different ethnicities. Haas and his staff quickly embraced this as a wonderful learning opportunity. “We knew we needed to break down [ethnic] barriers,” he explains. “People need to learn from each other.”



Because Bayview’s center wanted to focus on children’s programs, its staff quickly realized they needed to create programs that would educate and entertain. One of the center’s most popular offerings is its art program, which teaches children art projects influenced by the participants’ various cultural backgrounds. Haas says that thanks to an agreement with nearby Edgewood College, the center was able to hire one of the college’s students as an in-house art teacher to make these classes a regular offering.

The center also recruits student volunteers from the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s theater and drama department. Haas explains this arrangement benefits both the center and the students. “Students come twice a week to work with the center’s children as part of a four-credit course in their major” while the children gain experience in dance and performance arts. Additionally, the center is home to the Call for Peace Drum and Dance Company, which consists of several Bayview residents and combines the dance style of more than 10 different cultures into one performance, “Dancing the Dream: A New Hope for Humanity.” According to Artistic Director Dawn Shegonee, the troupe strives to “help bring communities together” through the universal language of dance.

Call for Peace has performed at events around the world, including the Fourth Global Summit for the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, held in November 2003 in Rome, Italy.

The pinnacle event for the Bayview Center and its community is the Triangle Ethnic Fest, an annual tradition that brings together not only all the ethnicities but also the elderly, the young, and people with disabilities. According to Haas, this is the largest ethnic celebration in Dane County and the most successful way to raise funds for the center's children's programs.

Haas is grateful to the Bayview Center's "powerful focus on diversity" and the positive impact it has made. Because of the center's efforts, its "voices are heard in our community. We hope we're making a difference." Haas also heralds the Neighborhood Networks initiative as "a great asset...one that I would recommend to any property."

For more information on the Bayview International Center for Education and Arts, please contact:

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Bayview Foundation, Inc.
601 Bayview
Madison, WI 53715
(608) 256-7808
www.bayviewfoundation.org

For more information on the Call for Peace Drum and Dance Company, please visit their Web site at www.callforpeace.org. 



Calendar of Events

Neighborhood Networks Conference

June 27–July 1, 2005

Neighborhood Networks 10th Anniversary National Training Conference

Lake Buena Vista, Florida

Conference Calls

May 24, 2005

Identifying Labor Market Trends in Your Community

Participants will learn how to gather and disseminate information about projected and current labor market trends to assist residents with career development.

June 21, 2005

Serving Diverse Populations

This conference call will feature some of the ways Neighborhood Networks centers have designed and delivered services to distinct and diverse groups.

July 26, 2005

Financial Literacy Training as a Neighborhood Networks Service

Teaching financial literacy to residents can help residents move toward self-sufficiency. This call will describe the elements of a financial literacy training program.

August 23, 2005

Staffing for Success

Center staff is a center's most valuable resource. Participants will learn how center managers can ensure that staff remains motivated, inspired, and continually learning.

September 20, 2005

Basic Fund Development for Neighborhood Networks Centers

This conference call will describe basic fundraising strategies targeted toward new, emerging, and smaller centers.

NETWORKNEWS

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